

Editorial: City's business climate helps create more jobs

High Point officials commended for making business a top priority

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Almost everyone appreciates a climate that produces warm, sunny days in late November.

The business climate in North Carolina and in High Point drew applause last week as well.

Many of High Point's business leaders gathered for the annual meeting of the city's Economic Development Corp. Thursday. The climate inside the dining room of Guilford Technical Community College's Joseph S. Koury Hospitality Careers Center was as pleasant as the warm, sunny day outside.

The audience heard from John O'Leary of Thomas Built Buses, Gary Gore of Bank of America and Mary Lawton of Polo Ralph Lauren - three companies that account for about 4,000 local employees - on the theme, "Growing and Thriving in High Point."

All described the benefits of working in High Point and commended city officials for cooperative relations. None complained about tax rates, utilities or other expenses. In fact, Gore cited the recent voter approval of \$300 million in school bonds as a positive development for business.

The point is that these large employers are satisfied with the climate for business here. All also have received public support, or incentives, either for their original location or for expansions. They've grown and added valuable jobs, even while companies elsewhere have shut down plants or laid off workers.

A favorable business climate isn't a gift from heaven like warm November days. It requires hard work and the right attitude. Government at all levels has a responsibility to provide affordable services, to maintain reliable infrastructure, to clear unnecessary regulatory burdens and to help preserve a high quality of life.

These have been top priorities in High Point.

Improvements still need to be made - in education, in road networks, in electric rates, in crime reduction and in many other ways. Economic developers also must respond to the decline in traditional industries, in High Point and across the state.

Even the best climate has its cold, rainy days. But the time when government could afford to be chilly to business has past. Instead, it must be a partner in creating a warm environment where companies can grow and thrive.

Just as 70-degree days in November provide proof of a pleasant climate, new jobs give evidence of the right business environment.